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# Navy Assist Teams - Potential Applicability to NASA

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Problem: NASA's Desire to Improve Program and Project Management

- NIAT Report Approach:
  - “NIAT actions present a framework for strengthening our approach to ensuring routine application of best practices across the full spectrum of agency programs and projects.”
  - “NIAT actions aimed at improving:
    - Formulation & implementation of programs and projects
    - Supportive nature of the environment in which they (Programs and Projects) are executed.”
  - “NIAT actions present a systems solution.”

*Could the application of a process used by the Navy in managing its Nuclear Weapons program be useful in achieving these goals?*



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## Background – Navy Nuclear Weapons Program

- ✓ Application of rigid and repeatable processes
  - ✓ No room for error.
- ✓ Intense oversight and monitoring.
- ✓ Audit and Certification of ship level programs.
  - ✓ Uses a combination of assist visits and inspections.
    - ✓ Nuclear Weapons Assist Team (NWAT) – Center type team.
    - ✓ Technical Assist Visit (TAV) – Headquarters type team.
    - ✓ Nuclear Weapons Assessment Inspection (Nwai) – Headquarters type team.



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- As Combat Systems Officer on a U.S. Navy Destroyer, I was responsible for the ships Nuclear Weapons program.
  - Certification process included two Assist Visits and one Certification Inspection.
  - Ship required to be certified to be able to carry special weapons.
- The First Assist Visit was conducted by the Nuclear weapons Assist Team (NWAT).



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- The NWAT visit was a formal visit which was carried out by two senior navy chief petty officers.
  - Team was comprised of two of the most knowledgeable and experienced Chief Petty Officers (with regard to the Nuc Weapons process) on East Coast.
  - Team had visited with numerous ships involved in this process and had seen the very best and worst practice.



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- At the completion of the visit the NWAT identified issues which required corrective action.
  - We were then required to implement corrective action.
- They also offered to return on an informal basis to assist us if requested.
  - Unlike most ships in the areas, we took them up on their offer and had them back on at least 15 different occasions.
- During their return visits, they rolled up their sleeves and provided us with ideas and recommendations on how to take our program to the next level.



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- As a result of their help and our willingness to use their help, my ship became certified during the next formal Assist Visit.
  - Referred to as the Technical Assist Visit (TAV).
- My ship was the first ship in 10 years in Norfolk to achieve certification during this Technical Assist Visit.
  - I contribute a great deal of this success to our use of the NWAT team.
    - Specifically, their efforts to help vs. inspect and report made all the difference in the world.

## Possibilities

- Could a center have an office or organization which could function as a Project Management “Assist Team” like the NWAT – say a PMAT.
  - Staffed by experienced/successful project managers.
  - Available to assist other project teams – as much/often as required.
    - Provide real “roll your sleeves up” type help.
  - Knowledgeable of all new program/project management changes/innovations/requirements/directives.
  - In regular communication with other such offices at other centers.



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- Of note: Similar efforts in this general direction are already underway.
  - MSFC has sponsored one-on-one meetings with retired Project Managers and interested Project and Center Organization managers.
  - Mentoring programs also provide a similar type of benefit.